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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

World Communist Reaction to the Invasion of Czechoslovakia

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
9 September 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

World Communist Reaction to the Invasion of Czechoslovakia

Summary

Deep divisions within the world Communist movement and many individual parties have been exacerbated by the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The reaction of Communist parties, generally dictated by national circumstances or degree of fealty to Moscow or Peking, have clearly shown that the CPSU can no longer exact the support of a large majority of the parties at the cost of their own interests. The invasion has evoked the overwhelming opposition of strong western parties and created internal turmoil in many CPs, as well as Soviet resentment toward its critics. This means, among other things, that such pet Soviet projects as an international Communist conference are in doubt. Few parties will break with Moscow and most parties will undoubtedly smooth over their internal problems but new seeds of dissension have been sown for the future.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence.

1. The reaction of world Communism to the five-power invasion of Czechoslovakia revealed clearly the deep cleavages within the movement and the willingness, even the necessity, of most parties to protect their own nationalist flanks first, and consider the welfare of the movement second. The lineup of Communist countries on the Soviet action reads, five involved, four concurring, and four against. This, of course, does not include Czechoslovakia.

2. It is ironic that three of the Communist countries supporting the move--North Vietnam, North Korea, and Cuba--have refused to cooperate with Moscow in its efforts to convene a world Communist conference and set down a generally acceptable line for the world movement. Although militantly independent, these three had little sympathy for the revisionist tendencies within Czechoslovakia and, at least in the cases of North Vietnam and Cuba, important national reasons for not provoking Moscow unnecessarily. Nevertheless, the Soviets, who had no significant Asian support for their world conference efforts, and little support of any kind for their invasion of Czechoslovakia, certainly must have been gratified at the concurrence of these three. Moscow apparently was quite willing to overlook their motives or the long-term significance of their support.

3. Cuban Premier Castro, with whom Moscow is currently at odds on numerous matters, gave perhaps the most blunt and honest statement of support. Castro, whose backing on the issue was by no means certain, stated that it was impermissible that any country should break away from the socialist camp and that "the socialist camp has the right to prevent it one way or the other." Typical of the manner in which Moscow must endure the slings and arrows of even its allies, however, the Cuban leader managed to contrast the USSR's firm action in Czechoslovakia with its support for various "oligarchic" regimes in Latin America.

4. That Yugoslavia, Rumania, China, and Albania would be opposed was never in question. China had, prior to the invasion, taken a "plague on both

Reaction of Some World Communist Parties to the Invasion of Czechoslovakia

SUPPORTING	OPPOSING
North Vietnam	[redacted]
North Korea	
Cuba	
Mongolia	
USA	
Cyprus	
Sudan	
Iran	
South Africa	
Costa Rica	
Uruguay	
Ecuador	
Chile	
Argentina	
Peru	
Luxembourg	
Portugal	
SED West (West Berlin)	
West German	
Lesotho	
Panama	
Brazil	
Dominican Republic	
Venezuela	

your houses" attitude on the Czechoslovak-Soviet dispute. Chinese media gleefully pounced on the invasion, calling the Soviet leaders "a pack of robbers," and stating that their "ugly Fascist features" were now exposed. In fact, the Chinese leadership was probably far from sorry to see the Soviet intervention. The Czechoslovak liberalism was certainly repugnant to them and the universal abuse heaped on the USSR must be gratifying. That the world Communist conference scheduled for November/December of this year--with the Chinese Communist Party on the outside looking in--will now be rendered much more difficult for the Soviets is also a plus for Peking.

5. The reaction of nonruling Communist parties was largely determined by positions already taken on the dispute, dependence on popular votes, or prior slavish subservience to either Moscow or Peking. Within even those parties which issued prompt statements of support or condemnation, however, the Soviet intervention widened existing fissures and many Communist leaders concurred with majority opinions in their parties only with the deepest personal reservations.

6. Legal parties, particularly in Western Europe, which are fully involved in the electoral process, found it incumbent to disassociate themselves clearly and quickly from the USSR. Prior to the invasion, both French party leader Waldeck-Rochet and Italian party leader Longo had made it known to the Soviet leaders that they would oppose intervention. When it came both reacted quickly. In condemning the invasion Longo made the strongest anti-Soviet speech of his career. The French party, which had suffered severely from its support of the 1956 Hungarian intervention, was still reeling from severe losses in the recent general elections. It issued an unprecedented official and public disapproval of the Soviet action.

7. In fact, Moscow received virtually no support from West European Communism. In Scandinavia, the Swedish party roundly berated the Soviets, and even the loyal Finnish Communist Party made a statement of objection. The Finnish party abruptly

cancelled the celebration of its 50th anniversary scheduled for 24-25 August even as Communist delegations were arriving. There is also evidence that dissension over the Soviet invasion has exacerbated previously existing splits in both the Finnish and Swedish parties. Support from such miniscule parties as the SED-West (West Berlin), the underground West German party, the Luxembourg party, and the Portuguese and Cypriot parties provided little solace to the Soviets.

8. Moscow received statements of support from most of the traditionally docile orthodox Latin American parties, but even suffered one defection here--the Mexican party.

9. Many statements of support or condemnation were of varying degrees of intensity and reflect the soul-searching and bitter argument that preceded them. Many tried to bridge seriously divided opinions. Many parties have simply not been heard from, or were not able to agree to a stand. The politburo of the pro-Soviet Communist Party of India, for example, met after the invasion and reportedly was not able to take a stand either in support or in opposition.

10. The Soviet and allied military intervention in Czechoslovakia, in short, was a wrenching experience which compelled the world's Communist parties to undergo their most agonizing soul-searching and reappraisal since 1956. Some parties will smooth over their internal problems, but, for most, new seeds of dissension have been sown for the future.

11. Several truths were surfaced in the world Communist movement by the current crisis. The foremost is that the day when Moscow could compel the overwhelming majority of Communist parties to sacrifice their own opinions and national positions to the interests of the USSR is long past. Few parties will make a permanent break with the USSR over this issue and ultimately passions will cool, but Moscow will not soon forget its abandonment by many of the

parties at this critical time. Finally, the chorus of opposition from some of the largest and healthiest Communist parties has demonstrated dramatically the hollowness of Soviet claims that the USSR is acting in the name of world Communism when compelled to take unpopular measures in Soviet national self-interest.